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*The lingua franca
of intelligence*

TO LEARN A FOREIGN TONGUE

Apprendre une langue etrangere

Pierre Ali Gonzales-Schmidt

An organization seeking to recruit employees with highly developed foreign language skills has slim pickings in the United States. Americans appear to be favorable to foreign language study, but they do not acquire much foreign language competence. In a 1979 nationwide poll, 76 percent of the respondents thought foreign language study was "worthwhile;" yet, only 8 percent had studied language for four years or more, the minimum amount of academic time needed to develop any real communicative skill. In the only systematic survey to date using the oral interview, graduating college majors in foreign language were found to have attained only about the S-2 (limited proficiency) level. In a more recent survey of college students, only about 12 percent of the respondents claimed to be able to "talk quite easily about their favorite bobby at some length, using appropriate vocabulary." Fewer than 4 percent could "quite easily describe the role played by Congress in the United States government."

Over the past several years, language departments in American colleges and universities have tried new programs to help students develop communication skills for the "real world." For example, some campuses have instituted undergraduate and master's degree programs that attempt to "put language skills to work" in foreign internships of sufficient length to give students functional control over the language. A number of universities are reinstituting foreign language requirements, dropped in the early 1970s, although the trend is not universal. Some institutions are launching intensive language instruction programs during summer sessions to provide the opportunity for motivated students to make rapid progress. Even so, the vast majority of these programs are at the elementary level.

With a few notable exceptions, it is not likely that current or future graduates will have greater foreign language communicative skills than graduates of the 1960s during the heyday of foreign language study under the auspices of the National Defense Education Act. Neither can we tap with ease the once almost unlimited pool of ethnic groups made up of individuals equally facile with their parents' language and English.

The minimal state of foreign language competence in the U.S. creates a need for the Agency, with worldwide responsibilities, to train its employees in a worldwide assortment of languages. The Language School of the Office of Training and Education has the task. For most students, it has to start at the elementary level. It also has to be selective. There are approximately 200 principal languages. More people speak one of the Chinese dialects than any

CONFIDENTIAL

1

CONFIDENTIAL*Language Training*

other language in the world. English is next, followed by Russian, Spanish, and Hindi. We can focus on only a few; the following pages tell the why, who, what, and how of the Language School's response to the challenge of the Agency language requirements.

The Need

La Necesidad

There is within the Intelligence Community a recognition that competence in one or more foreign languages is a valuable adjunct skill—that English is not the lingua franca of intelligence collection and analysis. More recently, full professional foreign language capability has come to be regarded as an integral part of overall job qualification, a required rather than a merely valuable adjunct to operational or analytical skills. Ethnocentrism and a lack of foreign language speaking proficiency severely hamper our intelligence mission both at home and abroad—and can cause outright failure in an overseas operational assignment.

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Full professional speaking/understanding capability and cultural awareness are critical to the success of [REDACTED]

Liaison operations, whatever the objective, often involve contacts with non-English speaking internal security personnel and, in a hostile environment, contacts with individuals who may in fact speak English but either prefer not to, or simply refuse to do so. The intelligence officer is in a better position to confront such adverse conditions if he can exploit the human relations value of being able to speak the language of the community in which he lives and works.

A host of overseas support activities may not require the level of proficiency expected of the agent manager, but real world needs often involve the valuable participation of clerical, logistics, and finance personnel in actual operations and, consequently, more than a mere survival level capability in a foreign language.

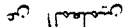
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Military, economic, political, and social research analysts require reading skills to allow direct and timely access to primary sources, as well as the ability to communicate effectively and diplomatically when interviewing or briefing non-English speaking individuals during meetings here and while on familiarization and research assignments overseas.

In-house translations into English of sensitive and classified material require the ability to read foreign language items addressed to the general reader, and the ability to read all styles and forms, very often of a highly technical nature.

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A list of reasons why the intelligence profession is better served by language-competent personnel could stretch to infinity, but one basic query is reason enough: Wouldn't you be more responsive to a person who can speak your language?

About Instructors


The instructors on the staff of the Language School represent many cultures and countries of origin. Monique came to the Language School as the war bride of a staff officer. She has been teaching French for 21 years. She is a principal in the development and organization of total immersion programs.

Nina works on her Ph.D dissertation when she can. An Argentinian born to Italian parents, she teaches both Spanish and Italian and in her three years with the school has become our second expert on testing.

Surin, a former Thai newspaperman, brings not only language expertise to his students, but also cultural and political insights.

Nick, who left the Soviet Union over twenty years ago, stays abreast of the living language through the Russian media; he has written a comprehensive grammar workbook to supplement his texts.

In addition to Monique, Nina, Surin, and Nick there are ☐ other full-time instructors who comprise our faculty. The full-time teachers are all native born and have an average age of 50 plus. Three-fourths of them are women. They are complemented by about ☐ part-time instructors with similar qualities. Some are available on an intermittent basis, which enables the Language School to expand and contract to meet changing requirements.

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Flexibility as well as intensive activity characterize a teacher's day at the Language School. Although there are no "typical" days for Language School instructors, most teachers give their students four to five daily class hours which students intersperse with laboratory work and self-study. Two of the class hours are usually dedicated to grammatical instruction. During the remaining hours, teachers reinforce in practice what students learned in theory. Field trips, role-playing, videotape viewing, individual and group discussion may be included in this segment of the instructional program.

Outside the classroom, teacher activity escalates. Instructors give employee and pre-employment oral proficiency tests, develop reading proficiency and achievements tests as well as supplementary written, audio and audiovisual exercises, create innovative class activities and produce in-house cultural and pedagogical videotapes.

To ensure consistency and excellence in language training, all new instructors are enrolled in a one-week ☐ a course designed to initiate them in a practical and varied manner into adult language instruction as it is carried out in the Agency. Instructors read about, discuss, and experience through demonstrations a modest number of new teaching techniques. They also observe classes in their own and other languages. The experience is invaluable because it links immediately what is learned in the

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CONFIDENTIAL**3**

CONFIDENTIAL*Language Training*

workshop to the real classroom setting. All discussions of and work with techniques is underpinned by the traditional four-skill—speaking, listening, reading, writing—approach to language situations. Why emphasize the four skills when we know that virtually all Language School students have speaking as their ultimate goal? The answer is simple although not necessarily obvious. Experience shows that skill in speaking is sharpened to a much greater degree in programs which not only provide for a great deal of speaking practice but also systematic listening, reading, and writing practice. The ability to read is, after all, basic to the ability to perform at full capacity in a foreign environment, quite aside from its value at Headquarters in the areas of research and analysis.

Beyond teaching techniques, instructors are briefed on the OTE resource centers that are available to them or their students. Finally, instructors are exposed to proficiency testing and achievement testing as they are done at the School. In maintaining this practical orientation, two other workshops are offered to instructors, [redacted] (b)(3)(c)

[redacted] In the former, instructors are given practice in writing (b)(3)(n) graded final training reports on students. The [redacted] (b)(3)(c) is centered on teaching methodology and theory. These seminars have two objectives: to give teachers an opportunity to expand their ideas on teaching, especially on teaching techniques and methods, and to deepen their awareness and understanding of traditional and new foreign language methods used in the United States and of the theory that underpins these diverse methods.

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Language teachers are also regularly scheduled to attend the seven-day [redacted] Course. Through this orientation the teaching staff has become familiar with the type of work which their students will be doing on overseas assignments. In addition, periodic seminars are devoted to the development of work-related syllabi and the preparation and int(b)(3)(c) [redacted] into basic language courses. The Language School(b)(3)(n) brings in specialists in the methods area from other federal agencies or the academic world to conduct workshops. Recently [redacted] linguists taught a one-week workshop on a new approach to the teaching of reading.

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CONFIDENTIAL*Language Training***Table 2****Full-time and Part-time Enrollments by Directorate FY 1982**

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Table 3 indicates the relative demand for full-time and part-time instruction, by language. French, German, Russian and Spanish in the recent past have been by far the most heavily enrolled languages if one looks at total enrollments. The place of Russian in this group is determined principally by a large part-time Headquarters program. These four languages account for 72 percent of the total enrollments during FY 1982.

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Table 3**Languages by Full-time and Part-time Enrollments FY 82**

Language	
Spanish	
Russian	
French	
German	
Arabic	
Chinese	
Italian	
Japanese	
Greek	
Thai	
Dutch	
Turkish	
Portuguese	
Indonesian	
Polish	
Hungarian	
Korean	
Scandinavian Fam.	
Vietnamese	
Norwegian	
Serbo-Croatian	
Persian	
Bulgarian	
Danish	
Romanian	
Total	

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Shortened language training programs because of other demands on personnel remains the most vexing problem faced by the Language School. Full-time students, on average, are scheduled for or actually attend only two-thirds of the basic beginning program required to achieve a "3" or professional level of competence. The problem is apparent to the Operations Directorate, which enrolls most of the full-time students. As personnel shortages are eased and more training time is made available, the problem should be relieved.

Another problem for the Language School is the small size of full-time classes, averaging just [] students. Though effective and personalized, this type of teaching is hardly cost effective. An ideal class size would be []

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Tailored to Professional Goals**以職業需要制定教材**

The Language School endeavors to tailor its language training programs to suit the specific professional and personal needs of its extremely varied and exacting consumers, employees from all Agency directorates who need a level of reading, speaking and/or listening skills for virtually any professional requirement. Basic full-time language courses consist of forty hours weekly of training which lasts from six months for the less difficult languages such as Spanish and Indonesian and extend to a year or more for the more complex languages such as Korean and Chinese. At any given period the Language School has an enrollment of from [] students in over 25 different languages. In classes which range in size from [] students learn to function both socially and professionally in their target languages.

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Although the traditional grammatical foundation forms the core of virtually all courses, the ultimate professional goals of students are developed from the earliest stages of training. Students are taught specific functions (persuading, denying, contradicting, requesting, etc.) with ever increasing degrees of sophistication as the courses progress; a beginning student, for example, might persuade a colleague to order coffee rather than tea while an advanced student might persuade a defector to repatriate and provide intelligence to the U.S. government. Functions permeate all classroom activities and are taught and practiced in grammar drills, role-playing situations, and free and controlled conversations. The latter are based on real life experiences, current events, videotapes, films, and pre-recorded audiotapes. Although culture is taught on a day-to-day basis from the first day of training, special exercises and in-house videotapes have been developed which are geared to teach special cultural points, expand students' cross-cultural insight, and reduce culture shock and the gaffes typically made by foreigners in a foreign country. Tradecraft, military, economic, political, communications and scientific terminologies are also woven into the established curriculum when there is a need.

A wide variety of part-time courses are offered to accommodate student work schedules and individual circumstances. A mini-language school offering three to four hours of weekly instruction in 10 languages has been set up in the Headquarters Building. Each year, approximately [] employees who cannot

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CONFIDENTIAL**7**

CONFIDENTIAL

Language Training

be freed for intensive training maintain or improve their language skills through the Headquarters program. When warranted, language classes are also set up on an ad hoc basis in other facilities;

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The Language School is constantly reviewing the types of language training offered to ensure that our students are being provided with the skills they need to do their jobs. To this end, a revised Language Use Questionnaire for returnees has been designed to provide current information about language use of Agency employees overseas. Analysis of the data from collected forms will help the Language School to focus on areas of specific need.

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The Language School is also experimenting with longer courses and through the use of control groups in selected languages we hope to gain a better insight into the time required to attain at least a minimal proficiency level.

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Total Immersion Programs

完全浸透プログラム

The Agency's Language School is unique in its expertise in offering and executing total immersion programs which enhance and supplement normal

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classroom instruction. These programs expose students to very intensive language instruction and practice by placing them in an isolated environment in which they are required to speak, hear and read exclusively the target language not only in daily classroom sessions but also in myriad formal and informal everyday and professional situations. Programs vary in length from two and one half days to three weeks. To supplement the Language School staff in these programs, a cadre of adjunct instructors is drawn from other Agency components which have linguists with native fluency. This provides students an opportunity to hear a variety of accents in the target languages.

The longer programs are offered one or more times yearly in French, Spanish, German and Russian. These highly time-efficient and instructor-intensive programs are geared for [] students who have reached an intermediate speaking proficiency level (S-2). They provide a wide variety of activities programmed throughout the day from 8 a.m. until well after 10 p.m. There is a steady progression from highly structured mornings through somewhat less structured afternoons to more relaxed evening activities. This division of the day corresponds to students' declining stamina and ability to concentrate and absorb new material.

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A typical day begins with three or more hours of grammar. Afternoons are usually dedicated to professional/operational role-playing exercises, monitoring of news broadcasts, individual conversation sessions with native speakers, debates, small group discussions of preassigned topics and monitored self-study time. Evening activities include films, most news programs, guest speakers, skits, games, student presentations or speech-inducing social events such as elicitation exercises.

Dramatic advances are made in participants' abilities to speak, understand and think in the target languages. During this type of training students invariably augment their vocabulary, improve their listening comprehension, and learn to speak more correctly and with greater ease and self-confidence.

Shorter immersion programs are offered several times yearly in most of the languages offered at the School. Similar to the longer programs in their content and general approach, they differ mainly in length, smaller number of participants, and the fact that students need not have reached as advanced a level to participate profitably.

Special week-long mini-immersion programs have been developed for specific professional needs. One such special program, for example, is designed to give survival level language ability to students who do not have time for traditional long-term training but who will need to communicate immediately after arrival in their country of assignment. Upon completion of such a course, students can give and understand directions, make simple requests, order food, book lodgings, and converse in a limited manner about biographical information and travel plans.

Total immersion programs have provided a quantum leap in efficient teaching. Other techniques are also worth exploring.

CONFIDENTIAL**9**

CONFIDENTIAL*Language Training***Computer-Assisted Instruction***Unterricht mit Hilfe des Computers*

The Language School has considered Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) several times in the past but did not find a system suitable for use. With recent technological advances in the area of computer power, video-disk and random access audio technology, and perhaps even voice synthesis, CAI now deserves a second look.

We believe that there is truly pioneering work being done in the domain of Intelligent CAI applicable to foreign language instruction which goes beyond the "frame-based" CAI representing the first generation of computer-assisted instruction. This new approach encompasses "expert-based" and "learner-based" systems, which incorporate subject-area expertise within the computer (in our case, knowledge of the grammar and vocabularies of the foreign language and English), and which build models of the learner's skills, thereby being responsive to the needs of the individual. While we do not believe that CAI, even Intelligent CAI, will ever replace the human instructor in the teaching of natural language, we do believe that its implementation would improve the quality of student self-study time and would free instructors to engage in more creative foreign language activity. School management considers it essential now to build awareness and expertise on the part of its instructional staff, and to monitor CAI systems and peripheral equipment as they are developed. To further this short-term goal of awareness- and expertise-building, the School is working with the Information Science Center to develop an in-house system, CAFLI (Computer-Assisted Foreign Language Instruction), which is currently being used in German and Spanish. We are also making available to instructors Agency and outside coursework in CAI development. The purpose of proceeding in this manner is to have available in the Language School the necessary support and expertise for the advanced CAI system that we suspect is not too far in the future.

Testing Language Competency*Dil Yetenegi Testi*

Directly complementary to the training mission is the second Language School mission—testing the foreign language competence of Agency personnel. Recently, testing has assumed increased importance for three reasons: the Agency Language Incentive Awards Program, which pays employees with tested competence for the acquisition, maintenance, and use of language skills; the government as a whole, particularly the [redacted] (b)(3)(n) which is honing the text and application of the government proficiency definitions; and academia (colleges and high schools), which is searching for a valid and reliable test method for ascertaining the extent of students' functional foreign language proficiency.

The Language School has been in the forefront of all three of these endeavors and is now the recognized government leader in oral proficiency testing. Recently, we were asked by the [redacted] (b)(3)(n) to help transfer the oral interview technique from the East to the West Coast. Under

Language Training**CONFIDENTIAL**

this joint [] Oral Interview Transfer project we have trained [] instructors and administrators in our common languages. Currently, a field test version of an [] Training Handbook is being used at both schools. Finally, the Language School is sharing its testing with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language in adapting the government definitions to academia, designing workshops, and training academic personnel in the interview's administration. We envision a day when a nationwide standard proficiency testing system will exist.

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How long does it take to learn French or Spanish or Russian or Thai or Arabic? This is the inevitable first question of both the manager who sends his employee to training and of the employee.

The Language School is just beginning to provide data-based answers to this question through analysis of information contained in the Language Training Database, which presently contains the records of all training done by the School during FY 1979, 1980, and 1981.

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We find that only [] (or 9 percent) of [] students in full-time training in the past three years who started with no prior knowledge of the language reached the "3" level; however [] (32 percent) reached the "2" and "2+" levels which appear to be more realistic goals given the length of time able to be spent in training.

Time in training, although customarily acknowledged as the primary factor in determining proficiency attained, is not the only factor. Aptitude for learning languages must be taken into account as well. Our statistics show an obvious but unmistakable trend; students with higher MLAT scores tend to achieve higher speaking proficiencies at the end of their language training. Even so, the MLAT score is not an infallible predictor of achievement; one student with a superior MLAT received only an S-1 at the end of training, and a number of below average students were able to attain S-2 and S-2+ (although none attained an S-3).

It does appear that given sufficient time in training, i.e., up to six months for the easier languages, significantly longer for more difficult ones, a sizable portion of Agency personnel can expect to attain the S-2 or 2+ level of speaking skill. There are significant populations of individuals, however, that appear limited by low aptitude to the S-1 and S-2 levels of achievement. Continued research will enable us to better predict how long it will take to obtain a usable language proficiency and how much a student will learn.

External Activities**ВНЕИНСТИТУТСКАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ**

The Chief of the Language School represents the Agency on the Foreign Language Training Committee (FLTC), which is a creature of the Intelligence Community Staff. One of the primary functions of the FLTC, as a matter of self-interest, is to reinvigorate foreign language studies, which are at a low ebb, in the various schools and universities. To this end, the FLTC effort is far reaching. The Department of Defense members bring to the FLTC the results

CONFIDENTIAL

11

CONFIDENTIAL*Language Training*

of participation in the DOD/Universities Forum. This group is dedicated to improving language and area studies through increased cooperation between government and academia. An education subcommittee of the FLTC is opening a dialogue with the Department of Education to determine the capability of major Education Acts to foster programs leading to improvements and increases in foreign language training throughout U.S. education systems. The Language School is devoting increased time and effort in the work of the FLTC and other organizations which have the capacity to either influence policymaking for increased language studies or are directly involved in improving academic capability to teach and test languages.

In addition to Agency requirements, the Language School is dedicated to increased participation in the language teaching profession. Along with the Foreign Service Institute, Defense Language Institute, National Security Agency, and the Department of Education, the Language School is a leader of the Interagency Language Roundtable, an informal governmental and professional association group which meets monthly to communicate and provide a forum for information and research exchange. Representatives from the FBI, Peace Corps, National Science Foundation, Center for Applied Linguistics, Modern Language Association, Library of Congress, AID, OPM, ICA and TESOL also attend the meetings of this polyglot group of about 25 organizations.

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Finally, both our staff and our teachers are consistent participants in professional language organizations such as the Modern Language Association, the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, and all of the language specific groups. They stay professionally qualified and informed and totally committed to providing the best possible language instruction to Agency employees.

Language Incentive Program

Πρόγραμμα Ενθαρρύνσεως Διά Εκμάθησιν Ξένων Γλωσσών

Good students, dedicated teachers, special techniques in training technology, and research, have had positive effects on language learning, but nothing succeeds like material reward. To that end, a Language Incentive Program was instituted in 1979.

At the DDCI's request, the Language Development Committee, comprised of representatives from all Agency directorates, implemented the Language Incentive Program designed to reverse the trend in recent years of declining foreign language skills in the Agency. By 1 April 1982, over [redacted]

(b)(1) [redacted] had been disbursed for language achievement, use, and (b)(3)(c) maintenance.

The Language Incentive Program is actually three separate but inter-related programs: the Language Achievement Program (formerly known as

Language Training**CONFIDENTIAL**

the Language Proficiency Cash Award Program), the Language Use Program, and the Language Maintenance Program.

The Language Achievement Program is for individuals learning a new language or increasing a language skill already possessed. Upon designation to the program, awards are determined by tested proficiency showing an increase in skills and are paid according to a published scale.

Within the Agency, certain positions have been defined as having a need for foreign language skills. In certain domestic positions and most foreign field positions with this requirement, the Language Use Program permits an award to be paid to individuals occupying the position and using the required language if current language test records prove language ability at the required level.

Because foreign language skills tend to disintegrate through disuse, the Language Maintenance Program pays a yearly award to those individuals who keep their language skills honed while at Headquarters or while using other language skills if their office has determined that the language skill to be maintained is of immediate or future benefit to the Agency.

The question of whether the Language Incentive Program is helping to reverse the decline of recent years in foreign language skills in the Agency is being studied; the Report of the Language Development Committee for FY 1982 showed a modest gain in the overall number of language skills in the Agency filled by fully language qualified personnel.

In the light of an already established trend, the Language School anticipates a continued steady increase of enrollments in language courses. The goal is 100 percent fulfillment of language-required positions by language qualified personnel.

To attain it in the minimal time will not only tax the ingenuity of those who do the training, but will require the support of all those who believe that superiority in foreign languages is essential in achieving superiority in foreign intelligence.

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CONFIDENTIAL**13**

